

Lawyer Tells Slayings Panel Ray Admitted

By Jeremiah O'Leary
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A noted criminal lawyer testified today that James Earl Ray admitted to him there was no such person as "Raoul," the man Ray has alleged was the mastermind behind the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Appearing before the House Assassinations Committee, 78-year-old Percy Foreman of Houston, Texas, said Ray made the admission during the approximately 50 hours of interviews he had with Ray when he represented the confessed slayer of the civil rights leader.

Asked by Rep. Robert W. Edgar, D-Pa., if Ray believed King's slaying was part of a conspiracy, Foreman

replied, "No. But he did believe it would be a defense for him if there was. That had been drilled into his subconscious."

"I told him there was no such person as 'Raoul,' He admitted that. I asked why he picked the name 'Raoul,' and he said it was the name of a bawdy house operator in Montreal he had held up."

FOREMAN SAID Ray did not believe he would be caught, and that he thought Ray wanted credit for having killed King, who was shot to death in Memphis, Tenn., in April 1968.

"Do you ascribe racism as his motive?" Rep. Floyd J. Fithian, D-Ind., asked.

"Indubitably and completely," Foreman replied. He said Ray had

told him that that was why he had thrown his rifle and other possessions bearing his Missouri prison number out on the street, "so the boys in 'Jeff City' (the Missouri State Penitentiary) would know."

Foreman continued: "Ray knew he would be convicted. He expected to go to jail and to escape. He said to me that he would never serve more than two years. When I tried to explain to him the difference between a 99-year sentence and a life sentence, he said it made no difference to him."

"Ray thought racial conflict was imminent between blacks and whites in America and he wanted to fire the first shot. To him, the shooting of Dr. King was the Pearl Harbor of that war. He intimidated to me; he would be the white hope. He hated blacks and thinks everyone else feels the same way."

FOREMAN SAID Ray himself decided to plead guilty because he was certain he would not serve more than two years.

"He said if I'd save his life, he would handle the rest of it," Foreman told the panel. "I didn't recommend against the guilty plea. I told him I thought he would be convicted and executed. But he suggested the plea."

Foreman was one of a series of lawyers Ray has retained and discharged since his arrest for the murder of King. In order for him to testify today, the committee obtained

Making Up

'Raoul'

a waiver of the lawyer-client relationship from Ray for Foreman.

"At first I was under the impression there was a conspiracy because of the things I had read about 'Raoul.' And I thought there was sufficient evidence to raise the suspicion in the minds of any jury."

But after checking out some of the evidence and reports, Foreman said he concluded there was no way Ray could escape conviction.

RAY HAS REPEATEDLY contended that he went to Memphis with a rifle he bought in Birmingham on the orders of the mysterious "Raoul," and that he thought he was involved in some kind of smuggling scheme. But for several years, Ray has been trying to disavow his guilty plea, which brought him a 99-year sentence, and continues to seek a new trial.

Earlier today, the House committee was told that Ray apparently did not have any criminal contacts or receive any financial assistance in the month he was in Canada after the King murder.

Committee investigator Edward M. Evans testified that the committee has been unable to resolve the question of how Ray obtained the aliases he used after visiting Canada. He said the staff could uncover no evidence that he contacted an alias ring or received other assistance in Canada.